



National Institute of Justice

S o l i c i t a t i o n

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Basic Research on Violence Against Women

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Basic Research on Violence Against Women

I. Introduction

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is soliciting proposals for basic research addressing violence against women. Violence against women includes family and intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking, and violence committed by acquaintances and strangers. **NIJ anticipates awarding up to 6 grants with a funding total of \$1,250,000.**

II. Background

On September 13, 1994, President Clinton signed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Pub. L. No. 102-322, 108 Stat. 1905-1995, as part of the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. For the first time the Federal government adopted a comprehensive approach to fighting domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, combining tough new penalties with programs to prosecute offenders and services to help female victims of violence.

The VAWA gave NIJ responsibility for a number of Congressionally mandated studies and national evaluations. Included among them was a study calling for a National Academy of Sciences panel to develop a research agenda on violence against women. The panel's report, funded jointly by NIJ and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has been published by the National Academy Press as *Understanding Violence Against Women*.¹

The report recommends a research infrastructure and research agenda that includes the nature and

scope of violence against women, causes and consequences of violence against women, and prevention and intervention. *Understanding Violence Against Women* has provided NIJ with an agenda for an ongoing program to address violence against women research and evaluation issues. The recent National Academy of Sciences report, *Violence in Families: Assessing Prevention and Treatment Programs*,² also guides this research program and the field.

Causes and Consequences of Violence Against Women. The National Academy's report, *Understanding Violence Against Women*, raises a number of important issues that need to be addressed regarding possible risk factors that may contribute to violence against women. These include cultural norms tolerating or accepting violence against women, alcohol and drug use, and witnessing parental violence as a child. Other areas that have received little attention include the relationship between physical violence against women and psychological violence, and the interrelationship between different forms of violence against women, such as physical aggression and sexual assault. Economic consequences of violence against women that have received little attention include impact of violence against women on women's labor force participation, and the cost of violence against women to the health care and criminal justice systems.

Custody and Visitation Issues. An emerging area of concern among battered women's advocates and legal scholars is the question of civil justice for battered women, particularly with regard to child custody and visitation issues.

¹National Research Council, 1996, *Understanding Violence Against Women*, N.A. Crowell and A.W. Burgess, eds. Panel on Research on Violence Against Women, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Can be purchased from the National Academy Press at (800) 624-6242 or (202) 334-3313.

²National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 1998, *Violence in Families: Assessing Prevention and Treatment Programs*, R. Chalk and P. King, eds. Committee on the Assessment of Family Violence Interventions, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Can be purchased from the National Academy Press at (800) 624-6242 or (202) 334-3313.

The husbands' ancient prerogative of controlling where his wife and children live is still embedded in American culture and continues to influence custody decisions even in cases of domestic violence.³ Although judges no longer overtly admit that the husband has the right to choose his wife's domicile, the father's status privileges continue to be protected using the rationale of the child's "best interests."⁴ In some custody cases involving domestic violence, the court's protection of fathers' access to their children gives violent men the power to prevent their victims from escaping, and to control essential aspects of their lives after divorce or separation.⁵ Fear of losing custody of children has been cited as a powerful barrier to battered women's escaping violence.⁶ It has also been noted that while some judges may blame battered women for not leaving their abusers, they are punitive towards battered women who flee from the jurisdiction to protect themselves and their children without seeking permission from their abusers or the courts.⁷

Another cause for concern is that domestic violence offenders are more likely to abuse their children than non-offenders.⁸ Furthermore, in some cases, courts have been found to punish mothers for failing to protect their children from an abuser, while in others, courts refuse to

believe mothers who try to protect their children from an abuser.⁹ This problem is most severe when sexual abuse of children is alleged. Cases in which courts deprive battered women of custody and visitation after they have made allegations of child sexual abuse against an ex-partner are increasingly coming to the attention of victims' advocacy groups.¹⁰ Although there are resources for educating and informing family court judges on issues involving domestic violence and custody disputes,¹¹ there are no data showing to what extent judges actually follow these guidelines when making decisions in custody and visitation cases.

Measurement Issues in Violence Against Women Research. A large unresolved area in domestic violence research relates to the issues of measurement and definition. Discrepancies have been noted between "family conflict" studies on the one hand, and clinical and crime studies on the other. Family conflict studies show equal rates of assaults by men and women, while crime victimization and clinical studies show much higher rates of assault by men.¹² The assertion by some scholars that violence in heterosexual relationships is symmetrical has been challenged by researchers showing that much of women's violence against men consists

³Bowermaster, Janet M., 1998, Relocation custody disputes involving domestic violence. *The University of Kansas Law Review*, Vol 46, pp 433-463.

⁴Siegel, Reva B., 1996, "The rule of love: Wife beating as prerogative and privacy. *Yale Law Journal*, Vol 105, pp 2117-2119.

⁵See Bowermaster supra Note 3 at 450

⁶Mahoney, Martha R., 1991, Legal images of battered women: Redefining the issues of separation, *Michigan Law Review*, Vol 90, pp 1-44.

⁷See Bowermaster supra Note 3 at 455.

⁸Stark, Evan, & Flitcraft, Anne H., 1988, Women and children at risk: A feminist perspective on child abuse, *International Journal of Health Services*, Vol 18, pp 97-102.

⁹Murphy, Jane C., 1998, Legal images of motherhood: Conflicting definitions from welfare "reform", family, and criminal law. *Cornell Law Review*, Vol 83, pp 688-766.

¹⁰Rosen, Leora N., & Etlin, Michelle, 1996, *The Hostage Child: Sex Abuse Allegations in Custody Disputes*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana.

¹¹Keilitz, Susan L (Project Director), 1997, *Domestic Violence and Child Custody Disputes: A Resource Handbook for Judges and Court Managers*, National Center for State Courts.

¹²Johnson, M.P, 1995, Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence Against Women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol 57, pp 283-294.

of “self defense” and “fighting back.”¹³ Some researchers contend that there may be two forms of intimate partner violence—common couple violence and patriarchal terrorism. The former is thought to consist of occasional outbursts by either the husband or the wife, diminishes over time, and has a lower probability of producing serious injury. The latter is thought to be part of a systematic pattern of dominance and control; involves male perpetration; and is associated with victim populations that come into contact with law enforcement agencies, hospitals, and shelters.¹⁴

There is currently little empirical evidence validating the existence of these two separate types of intimate partner violence. Such validation would be relevant not only for theoretical reasons but also with regard to the development and implementation of programs that provide services to battered women, and that provide interventions for domestic violence offenders.

Studies addressing measurement issues should pay particular attention to gender differences in perceptions of what constitutes a violent act. For example, one study found that men tend to exaggerate women’s violence toward them and downplay their own violence toward women.¹⁵

NIJ Research in Progress. NIJ is currently supporting a substantial body of research with a criminal justice emphasis addressing violence against women. Projects in progress include the criminal justice system’s response to domestic violence, and problems affecting hard-to-reach

populations of domestic violence victims. Evaluations are also addressing the major programs of the Violence Against Women Office, Coordinated Community Responses to violence against women, and anti-stalking efforts. Other current NIJ-supported studies include:

- Violence against immigrant women
- Violence against women from ethnic minority groups and among lesbians
- Injury patterns among hospitalized pregnant women
- A longitudinal study examining victim involvement in decisions to prosecute domestic violence offenders
- Community beliefs and perceptions about domestic violence
- Sex trafficking in women
- Neighborhood and individual risk factors for sexual assault

NIJ’s current research portfolio on violence against women and family violence can be accessed at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/vawprog/contents.htm.

III. Areas of Research Requested

Practitioner-Researcher Collaborations. Over the years NIJ has supported research that has been useful in modifying practice and formulating policy. Much of this research was done in cooperation with criminal justice agencies. This solicitation encourages the formation of close working partnerships among researchers and key practitioners relevant to the reduction of violence against women.

A number of factors have been found to be critical in the development of successful partnerships. These include a shared vision, problem-solving orientation, a clear definition of roles and responsibilities, effective communication, continuity of personnel, and benefits to all partners. Partnerships may be newly formed or may build on existing relationships. The applicant may be a practitioner agency, a research agency, or an academic institution. The partnership should

¹³De Keseredy, W., Saunders, D., Schwartz, M., & Alvi, S., The meanings and motives for women’s use of violence in Canadian college dating relationships: Results from a national survey. *Sociological Spectrum*, 17, 199-222

¹⁴See Johnson supra.

¹⁵Currie, D.H, 1998, Violent men or violent women? In R. Kennedy Bergen (ed.) *Issues in intimate violence*, pp 97-111, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California.

provide the justice system with policy-relevant research. The partnership should also afford research scholars the means and opportunity to contribute to the growing body of knowledge that can be used to effectively address violence against women.

A wide range of partnerships may be supported under this solicitation. Examples of partnerships include:

- battered women's shelter providers, legal service providers, and a researcher;
- advocacy groups, private clinicians, and a researcher;
- state government agencies such as family courts, child protective service agencies, advocacy groups, and a researcher;
- law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and a researcher;
- rape crisis centers, advocacy groups and a researcher.

A critical element of the application is that it reflect a genuine collaboration regardless of who may have initiated the effort. The applicant must clearly demonstrate a commitment to the partnership of all parties involved through activities such as problem definition, the development of assessment tools, and the collection of data.

Funding under this section is intended to support the establishment of the partnerships, the collaborative development of a policy relevant research agenda, and the completion of at least one research project. The applicant must include a task outline that includes a schedule for the completion of the key tasks over the course of the project.

While the partnership may address one or more initial short-term questions or issues, the completion of a specific research study is required. Documentation of the development of the partnership is critical, therefore the applicant

must include a plan to create a system to record the establishment, development, and achievements of the research collaboration.

Topic Areas Encouraged. Proposals are encouraged for basic research studies aimed at improving our understanding of the causes and consequences of violence against women, of custody and visitation issues in domestic violence, and issues of measurement and definition in research on violence against women. Topics for research include but are not limited to:

- Studies seeking to delineate and clarify measurement issues in research on violence against women, including the issue of the meaning and context of responses to items used in self-report scales;
- Studies examining the role of drug and alcohol abuse in domestic violence;
- Studies examining the role of cultural norms in the etiology of violence against women (including intimate partner violence, sexual assault and stalking), focusing on differences among ethnic and cultural minorities and other communities, such as students, professionals, blue collar workers, or sports communities;
- Studies examining the interrelationship among different forms of violence against women, such as rape and intimate partner violence;
- Studies examining the impact of violence against women on women's labor force participation, and women's economic well-being;
- Studies examining the cost of violence against women, and particularly of offender recidivism to the health care and criminal justice systems;

- Studies examining the number of victims who are turned away from services because of income levels that exceed cutoffs, but who cannot access their resources because of domestic violence;
- Studies examining the prevalence and psychological effects of witnessing parental violence, and the relationship of witnessing parental violence to violence perpetration;
- Studies examining the behavior of the courts and custody awards for families in which mothers allege domestic violence, child physical abuse, and child sexual abuse.

The above list is not exhaustive and is not intended to limit the applicant.

Up to six awards are anticipated for projects generally up to 24 months. The duration and the budget for proposed evaluations should be justified by factors such as the complexity of the design, the number of sites, and the size of the sample.

Methodological Considerations. In this solicitation, the need for innovation, particularly on qualitative measures, culturally sensitive measures, and the need for many different levels of data are acknowledged. Victims, advocates, and knowledgeable criminal justice practitioners should be brought into the various stages of the research process wherever appropriate. The use of data from a variety of systems (e.g. criminal justice, social services, public health) is encouraged. Also, applicants must include a statement that demonstrates an understanding of the requirement to ensure the protection of human subjects of such research.

Dissemination of Results. NIJ is interested in expeditious and innovative methods to disseminate the results from all projects supported under this solicitation. Methods that would supplement the more traditional forms of dissemination are encouraged. Results of

projects are expected to be reported to NIJ as they become available, and at a minimum, through semi-annual progress reports. Applicants should provide a discussion of the types of reports or products that would become available over the course of the project. ***Participation in an annual Grantee meeting is expected. Applicants should budget travel and per diem expenses for a two day trip to Washington, D.C., for each year of the grant to participate in these grantee meetings.***

IV. How to Apply

Those interested in submitting proposals in response to this solicitation must complete the required application forms and submit related required documents. (See below for how to obtain application forms and guides for completing proposals.) Applicants must include the following information/forms to qualify for consideration:

- Standard Form (SF) 424-application for Federal assistance. **The budget amount for the entire length of the project must be placed in box 15 of the SF 424.**
- Assurances
- Certificates Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters: and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Budget Detail Worksheet
- Budget Narrative
- Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate)
- Names and affiliations of all key persons from applicant and subcontractor(s), advisors, consultants, and advisory board members. Include names of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation (if any), department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, and fax
- Proposal abstract
- Table of contents
- Program narrative or technical proposal
- Privacy certificate

- References
- Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project
- Resumes
- Appendixes, if any (e.g. list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and products [in NIJ or other publications])

Proposal abstract. The proposal abstract, when read separately from the rest of the application, is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work. Applicants must concisely describe the research goals and objectives, research approach, and method for achieving the goals and objectives. Summaries of past accomplishments are to be avoided, and proprietary/confidential information is not to be included. Length is not to exceed 400 words. Use the following two headers:

Project Goals and Objectives:

Proposed Research Design and Methodology:

Page limit: For grants under \$50,000, the page limit is 15 double-spaced pages. For grants exceeding \$50,000 the limit is 30 double-spaced pages. Note this limit applies only to the “Program Narrative” part of the application, but not to the other components listed above.

Due date. Completed proposals must be received at the National Institute of Justice by the close of business on June 25, 1999. Extensions of this deadline will not be permitted.

Award period. In general, NIJ limits its grants and cooperative agreements to a maximum period of 12 or 24 months. However, longer budget periods may be considered.

Number of awards. NIJ anticipates supporting up to 6 awards under this solicitation.

Award amount. Awards totaling up to \$250,000 each will be made available under this NIJ solicitation. Higher awards should be justified by the complexity and cost of the design.

Applying. Two packets need to be obtained: (1) application forms (including a sample budget worksheet) and (2) guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for grant recipients). To receive them, applicant can:

Access the Justice Information Center on the web:
<http://www.ncjrs.org.fedgrant.htm#NIJ>
 or the NIJ web site:
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>

These web sites offer the NIJ application forms and guidelines as electronic files that may be downloaded to a personal computer.

Send 3 copies (one with original signatures) of completed forms to:

National Institute of Justice
 Basic Research on Violence Against Women
 810 Seventh Street N.W.,
 Washington, D.C. 20531
[overnight courier ZIP code 20001]

SL 000350

To find out more information about the National Institute of Justice, please contact:

National Criminal Justice Reference Service

Box 6000

Rockville, MD 20849-6000

800-851-3420

e-mail: askncjrs@ncjrs.org

If you have any questions, call or e-mail NCJRS.